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Planning

Oxford Covered Market - Main Contractor Procurement

Oxford City Council

UK2: Preliminary market engagement notice - Procurement Act 2023 - [view information about notice types](#)

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Scope

Description

1. Introduction

The Council is seeking to engage with contractors and determine the procurement route to secure a main contractor to deliver the Oxford Covered Market masterplan.

The Covered Market ("the Market") has been at the heart of Oxford's city centre since its foundation in 1774. It has always been in public ownership, with Oxford City Council ("the Council") the freeholder and operator since the start of the 20th century. Its significance spans heritage, culture, and commerce, as one of only a handful of 18th century covered markets in England which has been continuously trading (bar any enforced pandemic closures). The Market celebrated its 250th Anniversary in 2024.

In February 2023 Oxford City Council Cabinet approved a heritage-led masterplan and its recommended programme of works. A full consultant team was subsequently appointed following a competitive tender process to deliver the masterplan. The team includes Gleeds Management Services Ltd as Project Managers and Contract Managers (including cost consultancy) and separately a Design Team led by Gort Scott Architects. RIBA Stage 2 works are now complete and in February 2025 further enhancements to the masterplan and additional funding was approved by Cabinet with Council approval to the revised

budget. A copy of the report and masterplan are available on request.

2. Strategic Context

The Council's ambition is for Oxford to continue to be a city that is a world-leading centre of research, innovation and science and a thriving place for independent businesses. We will nurture strong, inclusive communities and be a welcoming and supportive place for people from all backgrounds to work, live and visit. In line with this, our aim is to support strong, fair and sustainable economy through this project. The Council's Corporate Priorities 2024-28 are to deliver;

- Good, affordable homes
- Strong, fair economy
- Thriving communities
- Zero carbon Oxford
- Well-run council

Oxford plays a significant role in some of the world's most important economic sectors and technologies. Our aim is to support sustainable economic development, ensuring that our city remains an attractive and thriving place for everyone, whether they live, work, or visit here. The support for local businesses represented in the Covered Market to deliver supply chain social value can contribute directly to that agenda.

Achieving net zero will require a citywide effort, involving local and national government, businesses, institutions, and citizens. While Oxford City Council itself is responsible for around 1% of the city's emissions, it has the potential to influence up to 66% of all emissions in Oxford. We have set ambitious targets for ourselves to be a zero carbon council by 2030 and a net zero city by 2040, subject to external funding. The proposals aim to facilitate low and zero-emission movement to and from the Market and encourage local shopping and as well as improvements to the efficiency of the building fabric and utilities to support this agenda.

Any proposal should support the Council's Corporate Priorities and in the context of this brief principally to enable a strong, fair economy and carbon objectives. The form of contract will require you to demonstrate how these objectives can be supported.

3. Programme

RIBA Stage 3 works are in progress with a planning application programmed for later this year.

The programme assumes tender for the main contractor commencing late 2025 with a start on site early 2027. Completion excluding defects liability periods is estimated late 2028.

Total value (estimated)

- £6,000,000 excluding VAT
- £7,200,000 including VAT

Above the relevant threshold

Contract dates (estimated)

- 1 January 2027 to 30 September 2029
- Possible extension to 30 March 2030
- 3 years, 2 months, 30 days

Main procurement category

Works

CPV classifications

- 45212350 - Buildings of particular historical or architectural interest

Contract locations

- UKJ - South East (England)
-

Engagement

Engagement deadline

1 November 2025

Engagement process description

1. Engagement Overview

Oxford City Council with Gleeds Management Services Ltd are proposing a competitive flexible procurement procedure for the Covered Market refurbishment, prioritising heritage protection, cost control and minimising disruption to market traders.

Due to the complex interdependencies of design, planning, heritage, and procurement, early contractor engagement is considered critical to maintaining programme milestones and ensuring project success.

This notice is to conduct and encourage early engagement with contractors to ensure that the resultant contracting route balances the competing demands in delivering improvements to a heritage asset in use including:

- Minimising loss of commercial income to traders.
- Achieving the most efficient phasing of construction, whilst occupation and trade in the market continues.
- Ensuring early input into the design team proposals and to support innovative solutions in delivering the above while respecting the heritage of the Market.

2. Key Objectives

The key objectives from the procurement are:

- Pre-Construction Advice: Engaging early contractor input to refine phasing, logistics, and cost planning.
- Public Procurement Act 2023 (effective 24 February 2025) Compliance: Ensuring transparency, fairness, and Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) inclusion.

- Risk and Cost Management: Mitigating financial risks while maintaining programme flexibility.
- Heritage Considerations: Conserving the Grade II-listed fabric and enhancing the heritage significance of the historic market.
- Keeping the Market Open: Minimising disruption to the public and income loss to traders.
- High quality construction and collaborative working

3. Market Engagement Timeline

We are inviting potential suppliers to participate in our upcoming engagement activities to help shape the procurement.

Activities:

- Market Engagement Introduction & Workshops - Tuesday 8th July @ 09.00-14.30
- Main Contractor Procurement - commencement late 2025
- Works on site - Start on site early 2027.

Please complete the online Expression of Interest (EOI) form to confirm your interest. A confirmation with further details and joining instructions will be shared ahead of the event.

4. Expression of Interest (EOI)

We invite you to register your interest in participating in the engagement process. Please complete the online form indicating:

- Whether you are able to attend
- If you are unable to attend if you would like details of the presentations (to be issued after the event.)
- Your specialist experience.
- Any topics you would like to see discussed on the day

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=OQ89nyteiE-dQ-k0T5qgLekBhI7eXOpHi00aI-FCIpNUMkNVSipFN1IGTU1SNFoxQlpaWFITWlpYWCQIQCN0PWcu>

5. Contact Information

If you have any queries or would like to discuss the upcoming procurement, please contact:

Roo Humpherson, Regeneration Manager, Oxford City Council.

e-mail: anhumpherson@oxford.gov.uk

Tel: 07483 261313

Participation

Particular suitability

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)

Submission

Publication date of tender notice (estimated)

1 November 2025

Contracting authority

Oxford City Council

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PJQW-3663-YMYQ

Oxford Town Hall, St Aldates

Oxford

OX1 1BX

United Kingdom

Email: Procurement@oxford.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.oxford.gov.uk>

Region: UKJ14 - Oxfordshire

Organisation type: Public authority - sub-central government